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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to examine a variety of collaborative relationships among college students, college faculty and cooperating professionals working together in teacher preparation programs offered by the Department of Special Education at Fitchburg State College, Fitchburg, Massachusetts. The rationale, models of implementation, outcomes, and evaluative procedures used to assess undergraduate and graduate student performance are described. Five levels of teacher development and paralleling collaborative relationships are discussed and described. These levels include pre-practica, a fused pre-practicum and practicum, that is, the Integrated Professional Program, student teaching, a field based clinical graduate program, and professional development programs for veteran teachers. A planning and/or evaluative matrix identifies essential components of collaborative programs, the personnel involved in different programs, and the responsibilities of the various parties as all of these interface in implementing collaborative programs at any level of teacher development. (Author)

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EFFECTIVE COLLABORATIVE TEACHER PREPARATION MODELS: DEFINING THE RELATIONSHIP

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The purpose of this article is to examine a variety of collaborative relationships among college students, college faculty and cooperating professionals working together in teacher preparartion programs offered by the Department of Special Education at Fitchburg State College, Fitchburg, MA. The rationale, models of implementation, outcomes, and evaluative procedures used to assess undergraduate and graduate student performance are described. Five levels of teacher development and paralleling collaborative relationships are discussed and described. These levels include pre-practica, a fused pre-practicum and practicum, that is, the Integrated Professional Program, student teaching, a field based clinical graduate program, and professional development programs for veteran teachers. A planning and/or evaluative matrix identifies essential components of collaborative programs, the personnel involved in different programs, and the responsibilities of the various parties as all of these interface in implementing collaborative programs at any level of teacher development.

Undergraduate Program

At Fitchburg State College, an undergraduate student who elects to be certified as a Teacher of Children with Moderate Special Needs also receives certification as a Teacher of Elementary School Children. This dual certification program facilitates the students' ability to integrate and maintain children with special needs in the regular classroom, and as special educators to consult and support regular educators servicing students with special needs in the conventional classroom setting. Philosophically, attitudinally and intellectually our students are prepared to accept the challenge of student integration.

Undergraduate students seeking certification as Teachers of Young Children with Special Needs, Teachers of the Visually Impaired or Teachers of Students with Severe Special Needs complete a program similar to the program which is described in detail here.

Our comprehensive quality program for preparing Teachers of Children with Moderate Special Needs provides a variety of field experiences based on the undergraduate college student's level of professional development and knowledge base. The first level of field based experience occurs in special education college courses requiring a supervised component in a school or facility providing service to children and youth with special needs. Several pre-practicum courses with a supervised field based component are offered. In the pre-practicum courses, students prepare materials and implement lessons with individuals or small groups of children, some of whom may have a special need. Cooperating school personnel provide support and direction to the students as well as evaluative feedback to students and faculty. At this level of professional development, feedback is provided to college faculty usually in the form of an informal checklist with comments.

During the junior year, special education students enroll in a one semester program, the Integrated Professional Program, which fuses pedagogical

content and application. The underlying assumption of this model is that more meaningful preparation of teachers occurs when college students and faculty are exposed to realistic learning experiences which provide for the simultaneous study of content, theory, and researched instructional practices as they are implemented in the classroom. The selected classrooms include children who have special needs who are at the pre-referral stage or whose Individualized Education Plan or IEP suggest that they be provided services by college students enrolled in the Integrated Professional Program.

The Integrated Professional Program consists of three phases: Orientation, Classroom Application, and Student Teaching Level 1. These phases are designed to provide a structure to enable students to learn content and to apply this knowledge in the classroom. During a three week orientation period formal seminars are held daily from 8:30 A.M until 3:30 P.M. At this time students examine curricula and appropriate strategies in language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. Following this orientation students are assigned to a classroom where they have an opportunity to apply this content during a six week period in assigned schools, Monday through Friday from 8:00 to 12:00. Seminars are held two afternoons a week to provide additional content to enable students to discuss their teaching experiences with emphasis on those children who have special needs. During the last six weeks of the semester, college students assume the role of a student teachers in the same classroom for the entire day, gradually assuming more responsibility as teachers. During this period, informal seminars are held on site to provide continued support to the college students and to allow for further discussion of appropriate instructional and management strategies for use in the classroom.

Throughout the semester the students are asked to gradually increase their responsibilities in the classroom. They begin by observing children suspected of having difficulty in the mainstream, progress to working individually with a child, that is, assessing the child's learning and planning individual lessons, progress to working with small groups of children, for example, a reading group, and finally with large groups of children, for example, a science lesson. Emphasis is placed on effectively integrating the child or children with special needs in the classroom activities.

Students are observed, supported and coached by the cooperating teacher and two college faculty who are on location three days per week. Support is focused on identification of learning difficulties, curricula, instructional design and modification, and issues related to classroom management.

Student teaching, a full semester professional experience, provides an opportunity for students to assume complete responsibility in the roles of special educator and regular classroom teacher. Students spend eight weeks working with a Resource Room Teacher and other support personnel. For a portion of their teaching day, the children in the resource room are integrated with their peer group according to their abilities. During the experience college students develop an Individualized Education Plan, participate in team meetings and work with regular class teachers to facilitate mainstreaming efforts. Students complete an additional eight week practicum in the role of the conventional classroom teacher. In the selected regular classrooms in which college students teach, children with special needs have been successfully integrated. The college students provide input

to special educators responsible for implementating IEP's, to regular educators regarding curriculum and instructional modifications and they develop instructional units in which all children may participate. During the final weeks of the placement, students assume the role of the teacher being responsible for the complete instruction of the class.

College faculty rely on cooperating teachers' in-put for on-going monitoring and evaluation of students progress. The college supervisor meets with the students and cooperating personnel every other week to assess the student's strengths and areas needing improvement. In addition, this is an opportunity to address knowledge and or skill areas needing further development. Seminars are held at various school sites to expose students to different types of school organization and to further discuss topics generated by the students or viewed as a need by the college supervisor.

Graduate Program

After completion of a bachelorate program, teachers may enter into graduate study to obtain a master's degree in education with specialization in Special Education. Until recently, the graduate program was a traditional college based program which led to certification as a teacher of individuals with special needs. In keeping with current national reform of teacher education, a clinical master's program has been developed.

The one year clinical master's program in Special Education is field based, that is, eighty percent of content delivery and associated experiences take place in targeted schools, thus moving graduate faculty from the college to where special educational services are delivered to a wide range of children. The content of the program, delivered in community schools, addresses theory, subject matter, and research in the following strands: Instructional Strategies, Curriculum, Assessment, and Professional Communication. Additional courses and seminar topics include: Research Methods, Legal and Ethical Issues, Developmental Theories and Current Issues in the Field of Special Education. This one year program includes two summers of study and has been designed for graduate students who have provisional certification in special education and are not employed. A similar two year program meets the needs of provisional teachers employed as special educators.

In these programs provisionally certified teachers, that is, graduate students, are placed in integrated classrooms of selected schools. In these settings they identify learning needs of children, design and implement instruction, and critically evaluate student performance with careful attention paid to targeted integrated students. The lead special educator in the school, serving as a mentor, and the college faculty member together support the team of graduate students who work with children in integrated classrooms. The lead special educator and other school staff participate in the delivery of content of the pedagogical program.

Institutional Collaboration - Professional Development for Experienced Staff

College faculty collaborate with public school teachers and administrators in the field by designing, implementing, and participating in staff development programs tailored to address specific goals and needs of the

school system or of a given school. College faculty from the special education, education, early childhood, educational technology, and liberal arts departments participate in the design and development of such field based courses or programs of study.

One or two college faculty members and a small group of school administrators and teachers develop field based courses of study which combine theory, demonstration teaching, research, consultation, and peer support. Courses are often team taught by college faculty and school based faculty and are delivered in the school. Some courses are offered for college graduate credit and others for system assigned credit. In some school systems, the history of institutional collaboration is such that a complete master's in education program has been offered for public school staff in the system. The components of such programs are tailored to address the goals of the system and the needs of the professional staff. Examples of content addressed in such programs include: behavior management strategies for the integrated classroom; peer coaching; integrating critical thinking skills across the curriculum; educational technology in the classroom; mathematics and science curriculum revision, k-12; and, others. A variety of funding sources are utilized to deliver these programs including: Commonwealth Institute Grants, Board of Regents Grants, School Improvement Funds, Chapter 188 Grants, Professional Development Funds from the school system, student teacher vouchers and tuition paid by students. Many of the long term staff development programs, that is, programs that take place over a period of two or three academic years, use a combination of the named funding sources.

Institutional collaboration between public schools and colleges, which has as a main focus the preparation and on-going professional development of teachers, requires a unique and different level of commitment, trust and a creative sharing than has been the norm over the last decades. The accompanying matrix delineates the roles of personnel in collaborating relationships and specifies a variety of functions and contributions individuals and systems bring to these relationships. Both systems, that is, the public school and the college must broaden their mission, be open to each other's goals, needs and feedback, and be willing to share their human and financial resources as we collaborate to address the goals and needs of educators at each level of professional development.

COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS

Program/Course Title: _____
Type of Collaboration: _____
Children/Youth Serviced: _____

	CT	ST	F	A
Structure				
define the experience				
determine time line				
establish sequence of experience				
share essential information				
Content				
set knowledge objectives				
set skill objectives				
Support/Supervision				
direct				
indirect				
Evaluation				
formal				
informal				
qualitative				
quantitative				
Resources				
physical				
human				

Responsibility:
P = primary
S = secondary

Key:
CT = cooperating teacher, peer coach, department chair
ST = undergraduate student, graduate student, professional para/professional
F = undergraduate college faculty, graduate faculty, adjunct faculty
A = administrator, principal, superintendent, on-location coordinator

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